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A PERSWASIVE TO REFORMATION AND UNION AS THE Best Security Againſt the Deſigns OF OUR POPISH ENEMIES.

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A PERSWASIVE TO *REFORMATION* AND *UNION*.

THERE are none at this time, except ſuch as are wilfully ignorant, but are convinced what danger our eſtabliſhed Religion and Government have of late been, and ſtill are in, from our Popiſh adverſaries.

It is well known what theſe men have deſigned againſt us, and how near ſome of their deſigns were brought toward execution, *viz.* to aſſaſſinate our Sovereign, to ſubvert our Religion, to introduce the Popes monſtrous tyranny and uſurpation, and probably to maſſacre all ſuch as were likely to reſiſt them or oppoſe their deſigns. And though hitherto God hath graciouſly diſappointed them; yet in all likelihood their Hopes are ſtill great, and their deſigns proportionable. It is true, God hath hitherto defeated their conſpiracies, and caught them in the net which they have laid for others. This, as it ſhould encourage our hope and dependance on the Al-

mighty, ſo ſhould it excite our care to be ever under his protection, and by this to endeavour the continuance of the peace and happineſs of this Kingdom. All that lies in the power of private perſons (to whom this diſcourſe is addreſſed) to effect this, is, to preſent their Prayers to God for his Bleſſing on this Nation, and to be ſuch as God may hear their Prayers. Let us therefore earneſtly petition him, who is the giver of mercies and ſafeguard of Nations, to continue his goodneſs to us in preſerving our Sovereign, influencing and directing publick Councils, and infatuating the deſigns of ſuch who ſeek our ſubverſion. But withal, when we know, that *if we regard iniquity in our hearts the Lord will not hear our prayers*; that it is in vain for us to hope for bleſſings from God, while we provoke this fountain of bleſſings by our ſins; and that we cannot with reaſon imagine that our Prayers ſhould find acceſs to Heaven, while our iniquities that cry to Heaven for vengeance make *a ſeparation betwixt God and us*: Hence it clearly appears, that,

1. *Reformation, Repentance,* and *turning from our evil ways,* conjoyned with our *Supplications* to God, is the chief means of this Nations ſecurity: and that whoever they are, that break from their ſins, and much more thoſe that *convert others from the errors of their ways,* are highly inſtrumental to promote this Kingdoms happineſs, *Prov.* 14. 34. *Righteouſneſs exalteth a Nation, but Sin is a reproach to any people.* To make this evident, conſider (1.) that Sin on two accounts tends to a Nations Ruine; *Firſt,* by way of efficiency, as it makes men brutiſh and fooliſh, and unable to underſtand what is really for their good; as it diſpirits them, and robs them of true courage and valour; and withal, as it renders them contemptible, and hence firſt a ſcorn, and then an eaſie prey to their Enemies. *Secondly,* meritoriouſly, as it provokes

provokes God to inflict his Judgments, to raiſe up and proſper Enemies, and to defeat ſuch counſels as have a tendency to the Nations happineſs. Thence was it, that God ſo ſeverely threatned the *Iſraelites* with calamities if they dared to provoke him by their ſins, *Deut.* 28. and ſo often executed thoſe threats upon their provocations.

2. There are ſome *ſins* which in a ſpecial manner God hath threatned to puniſh a Nation for, and that do in their own nature call for *vengeance*: And they are ſuch as immediately ſtrike at the Majeſty of God: For ſuch bold affronts challenge the Almighty, and call for vengeance upon the offenders. Hence we find Idolatry, rejecting God and worſhipping Idols, chiefly mentioned as the Reaſons of the *Iſraelites* deſolation and captivity: Both by way of threatning, when their miſeries are foretold by *Moſes* and the Prophets; as alſo the ground of particular calamities and captivities, when they have befallen them. Thus the Reaſon of the captivity of the ten Tribes is aſſigned (2 *Kings* 17.) to be their *making molten Images, worſhipping the Hoſt of Heaven, ſerving Baal, making their children to paſs through the fire,* &c. And that for which God was chiefly angry with *Judah*, was the ſins of *Manaſſeh*, 2 *Kings* 23. 26. together with that mentioned 2 *Chron.* 36. 16. *But they mocked the meſſengers of God, and deſpiſed his words, and miſuſed his Prophets, until the wrath of the Lord aroſe againſt his people, till there was no remedy.* When men come to ſuch an height of impudence, as immediately to ſtrike at God and his perfections, is it a wonder that this jealous God ſhould awake in fury and expreſs his ſevere diſpleaſure againſt ſuch offenders? If men will diſown God, or deny his Exiſtence, or queſtion either his Power or Truth, and dare to ſcorn and vilifie his Word; is there

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not Reaſon for the High and mighty One to vindicate his Honour, and to manifeſt himſelf a God of infinite Power and Truth, by ſenſible demonſtrations of his Majeſty, that have a tendency to awaken ſecure ſinners, and for ever to ſilence thoſe that dare impudently to contend with the Almighty?

Let us conſider, whether ſome of theſe ſins are not committed, ay, and with an high hand, and with monſtrous impudence in this Nation. Though God is not rejected by mens ſetting up of falſe Gods, yet he is by their denying the Exiſtence of him that is the true God. Though he is not diſhonoured by erection of Altars to other Deities, yet is he abominably contemned by the profane neglect of his own Ordinances, and the vile ſcorn that is caſt upon them. Alas! what a profligate age do we live in, wherein ſome dare not only ſay in their hearts, but have the confidence to utter it with their mouths, that there is no God, and others to deny his Providence and Superintendency over the world? Nay, it preſages ill, that there are ſuch multitudes whoſe Actions publickly proclaim that theſe are their Thoughts. For who durſt profane Gods name by vain Oaths and Curſes, and much more by Perjury; who believes that there is a God, who will not hold theſe Guiltleſs? Who durſt be Indifferent in Religion, or think themſelves unconcerned to depend on God for his bleſſing, or to own his Goodneſs in ſolemn praiſes; who believe that God governs the world, and that in him we live, move and have our beings? And laſtly, who durſt contemn and vilifie ſuch whoſe office is to be Miniſters of Gods worſhip, and Paſtors of Souls; who believe that there is a God that is to be worſhipped, or that they have Souls that are immortal and capacitated for the enjoyment of endleſs felicity? Now when it is too evident

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that Gods Being is queſtioned, his Providence denied, his name blaſphemed, his word ſcoffed at, his worſhip neglected by ſo many, and by others expoſed to ſcorn as the product of folly and Melancholy, and laſtly, his Ordinances and whatever is Sacred is contemned; may not God ſay to us, as he did to the *Jews*, *Shall I not viſit for theſe things, and ſhall not my Soul be avenged on ſuch a Nation as this?* Jer. 5. 9. I might likewiſe here have ſhewn, how that theſe things not only merit deſtruction, but alſo are the immediate cauſes, inlets and Inſtruments of that from which we chiefly fear our miſeries: I mean that *Irreligion* is the chief means to bring in *Popery*. For when men are indifferent about Religion, any Religion is alike to them, ſuppoſing it comply with their corrupt inclinations and intereſts: Now 'tis likely they will ſooneſt chuſe that, wherein they are deluded with hopes of ſinning ſecurely, and yet dying happily.

3. One thing that inhances a Nations ſins and haſtens their ruine, is, when they are perſiſted in after Judgments that God hath uſed to reclaim them. It is clear that Incorrigibleneſs is in mens eſteem an addition to other offences, and renders the perſon unworthy of pity: And to be ſure it is thus in Gods eſteem, *Amos* 4. 6, to 13. *Englands* caſe in many reſpects runs parallel with that of *Iſrael*, beginning at the tenth verſe. May not God ſay to us, *I have ſent among you the Peſtilence after the manner of Egypt*, when my deſtroying Angel ſlew ſuch multitudes in *London* and other places of the Nation. *Your young men have I ſlain with the ſword.* In the late Civil wars I gave the Sword a Commiſſion to deſtroy multitudes, when Father was againſt the Son, and the Son againſt the Father, when there were ſo great confuſions brought upon the Land, when *a pious King* was cut off, *his Son exiled, the Nobles debaſed*, the uſurping government

ment frequently changing, that *England* being emptied from one Veſſel to another might be purified from her dregs, and yet ſhe continues filthy and impure: Beſides, the multitudes that have more lately been ſlain in wars with your Neighbours: *Yet have you not returned to me ſaith the Lord.* Beſides this, that you might in one dreadful ſpectacle behold a monument of my wrath againſt ſin, I have wrought a thing that neither you nor your forefathers ever beheld, nor could have expected; *I have overthrown ſome of you as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrha.* I made your *City* that was your pride and glory, a deſolation, reduced that place to Aſhes which made *England* admired, envied and feared by her neighbours: And may not God add, *yet have you not returned unto me?*

4. Another aggravation of a Nations ſins is, when they are committed againſt ſignal favours; when we dare to offend him, while he is loading us with his Benefits. *Moſes* frequently mentions mercies received as a ſtrong obligation to the *Iſraelites* to obey him who had wrought ſuch great things for them. If God delivered them from bondage, wrought mighty things for them in *Egypt* and at the Red Sea; if he provided food for ſo great a multitude in a barren wilderneſs, acted towards them as a nurſing Father, choſe them for his peculiar people; God juſtly expects a ſtricter obedience from them for whoſe ſakes he had done all this. And therefore afterwards God on this account aggravates their ſins by his Prophets. As *Jer.* 2. 4, 5, 6. Now certainly if God ever dealt graciouſly towards a Nation, he hath acted thus towards us; and conſequently we are a vile ungrateful people, if we live in Rebellion againſt him. Hath not God planted us in a fair place, given us a Land flowing with milk and hony, beſtowed on us manifold

Bleſſings

Bleſſings which our own Country produces, and by our ſhipping the Riches of other Nations? Hath he not beſtowed ſpiritual Bleſſings on us in a great meaſure, that we have his Candleſtick in the midſt of us, that we enjoy the Goſpel ſo clearly preached, that we are a Church ſo excellently reformed, ſo as to reject the corruptions of *Rome*, and yet to retain that *Government* which hath continued from the *Apoſtolick* Age? Hath not God graciouſly delivered us from the deſigns of thoſe who have endeavoured to reduce us under the *Papal Tyranny*, and to introduce their corrupt doctrines and ſuperſtitious practices? I might mention Gods bringing to light and diſappointing the *Plots* laid againſt *Queen Elizabeth*, and the Helliſh conſpiracy of the Powder-Traitors, and other mercies of ancient date: As alſo the deliverance of us from ſad confuſions by the happy reſtauration of our Gracious Sovereign. But that which now chiefly challenges our obſervation, is Gods diſcovery of the abominable traiterous deſigns of the Papiſts to murder the King and others that ſtood in their way, and hence to ſubvert our Religion and Government: And that God ſhould diſcover this when it was ſo near taking effect. We cannot but own theſe to be ſingular favours, if we duly conſidered them; and conſequently our ſelves to be a wretched unworthy Nation, if notwithſtanding all theſe, we go on to provoke that God who beſtowed them on us.

5. I might have named another circumſtance or two which heighten a Nations Guilt, *viz.* when ſin is committed with an *High hand*, and wickedneſs is impudent and bare-faced; as alſo when the Guilt is univerſal, when all ranks and degrees of men are degenerate. But ſeeing this excellently handled by Dr. *Stillingfleet* (in a Faſt Sermon on 1 *Sam.* 12. 14, 15.) as alſo I am not ſo well able to apply this as the former from my ignorance of

the ſtate of this Nation; I leave others to conſider whether a Spirit of Irreligion and contempt of what is Sacred hath not overſpread the face of this Land; and whether from hence many abominable practices which former Ages would have bluſhed at, have not been boldly committed among us. Lay all this together, and we may conclude our Guilt is great, and our fears of Puniſhment too well grounded: When our ſins are great, and of ſuch a nature as ordinarily provoke God to plague a Nation; when committed notwithſtanding former warnings and chaſtiſements which he hath uſed to amend us; when perſiſted in notwithſtanding Gods ſignal favours, which he hath vouchſafed to us to lead us to Repentance: So that God may ſay to us, as he did to the *Jews*, *Eſay* 5. 4, 5. *What could have been done more to my Vineyard, that I have not done to it? Wherefore when I looked it ſhould bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my Vineyard; I will take away the hedge thereof, and it ſhall be eaten up: And break down the wall thereof, and it ſhall be trodden down: And I will lay it waſte.* Laſtly, when our Kingdom is ſo overſpread with guilt, and hardened in iniquity, when they have (as *Iſaiah* ſpeaks, *Chap.* 5. 3.) *made their faces harder than a rock, and refuſed to return*; may we not expect that ſentence to follow which is denounced *ver.* 9. *Shall I not viſit for theſe things? ſaith the Lord: and ſhall not my ſoul be avenged on ſuch a Nation as this?*

6. Though we have juſt ground to fear the wrath of God, if we perſiſt in our Rebellion againſt him; yet withal we have ſufficient ground to hope, that if we *Repent and turn from our evil ways, iniquity ſhall not be our ruine*, *Ezek.* 18. 30. This we are aſſured of, both from the Promiſes that God hath made to Returning ſinners,

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and from the Examples of his Mercy in pardoning penitent perſons and Nations. As for Promiſes, 'tis ſufficient to inſtance in that of *Jer.* 18. 7, 8. *At what inſtant I ſhall ſpeak concerning a Nation, and concerning a Kingdom to pluck up, and to pull down, and to deſtroy it: If that Nation againſt whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.* And as for Examples of Gods pity in forgiving ſuch as have repented, and his forbearing to inflict the vengeance he had denounced, that in *Jonah* 3. will ſuffice. God had there denounced a ſentence of deſtruction againſt *Nineveh*, and prefixt the time of its Execution: *Yet forty days and* Nineveh *ſhall be overthrown.* When the Inhabitants of that City upon this meſſage faſted, cried mightily unto God, and decreed that every one ſhould turn from his evil way and the violence of his hands: We are told, *verſ.* 10. *that God ſaw their works that they turned from their evil way, and God repented of the evil that he had ſaid that he would do unto them, and he did it not.* We know *that Gods hand is not ſhortened that it cannot ſave, nor his ear heavy that it cannot hear:* He is both able and willing to do us good, did not our *iniquities ſeparate between us and our God, and our ſins cauſe him to hide his face from us that he will not hear,* when we pray for mercies. But withal we are aſſured in ſuch a caſe, that if we *humble our ſelves and pray, and ſeek his face, and* (together with that) *turn from our wicked ways, that God will hear from Heaven, and will forgive our ſins, and will heal our Land,* 2 *Chron.* 7. 14. What therefore ſhould each of us do, in order to the ſecuring of this Nation and the continuance of thoſe bleſſings we enjoy, but ſearch our hearts and *try our ways, and turn unto the Lord our God?* If we would have God to preſerve the life of our gracious Sovereign, to give him a wiſe and under-

ſtanding heart, to direct and bleſs publick Councils, and hereby ſecure our lives, our liberties, our peace, our Religion, and other bleſſings which God hath hitherto vouchſafed; it is our intereſt to do what God requires, *Iſaiah* 1. 16. *Waſh ye, make ye clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, ceaſe to do evil, learn to do well, ſeek judgment, relieve the oppreſſed*----- It follows, verſ. 18. *Though your ſins be as ſcarlet, they ſhall be as white as ſnow; though they be red like crimſon, they ſhall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye ſhall eat the good of the land: But if ye refuſe and rebel, ye ſhall be devoured with the ſword: for the mouth of the Lord hath ſpoken it.* As this which I am perſwading you to, hath an immediate influence on the Nations welfare, ſo it hath upon each particular perſons eternal felicity. Let every one therefore forſake his evil ways: *Let him that ſtole, ſteal no more*; let him that hath wallowed in uncleanneſs, learn how to poſſeſs the *veſſel* of his body *in ſanctification and honour*, and *not in the luſt of concupiſcence, as the Gentiles that know not God.* Let him that hath followed *ſtrong drink* and hath been *mighty to drink wine, take heed leſt at any time his heart be overcharged with ſurfeiting and drunkenneſs.* Let ſuch, who have vented Oaths and curſes, for which *the Land mourns*, and by which the name of God is ſo highly diſhonoured, beware leſt *any* ſuch *corrupt communication proceed out of their mouths.* Let ſuch, who have ſcoffed at God and his providence, who have derided the *Holy Scriptures* and whatever is Sacred, now live as in the preſence of his infinite Majeſty, and manifeſt for the future as great a Zeal in vindicating the glory of God, as ever they expreſſed their folly and madneſs in oppoſing it. I am ſenſible what entertainment ſuch a diſcourſe as this is, will probably meet with among theſe laſt named, that hate any thing that is ſerious,

ous, and ſcorn the moſt Sacred truths, though conſonant to the beſt improved Reaſon, and backed with the higheſt authority. And ſeeing ſuch men endeavour to baffle their own Reaſons, and conſequently will not be reſtrained by principles of Conſcience; it is fit they ſhould be reſtrained by Laws, and thoſe to be new-made; ſeeing former Ages never ſuppoſed ſuch offences, and thence never enacted any puniſhment to be inflicted on ſuch offenders. But I proceed to others who are more likely to attend. Let me intreat you as you deſire *Englands* proſperity, and therein the welfare of your intimate acquaintance and friends, the happineſs of your children and poſterity both now and when you are dead and gone, nay, as you deſire your own felicity in this world, as well as in another; take care *to deny ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, and to live ſoberly, righteouſly and godly in this preſent world:* diſcharge the Duties you owe to God and man. Neglect not the publick worſhip of Almighty God, but be conſtant in joyning with others in ſolemn Prayers and Praiſes, and in attendance on the word of God as the means of ſalvation, as alſo in celebrating the infinite love of Chriſt, and partaking of the benefits of his paſſion in the Lords Supper. Leſt God in juſtice deny to us the priviledges we now enjoy, and ſuffer ſuch to prevail, who uſe an unintelligible way of worſhip, having their prayers in an unknown tongue, and a corrupt ſuperſtitious way of Worſhip (not to ſay any worſe of it) in robbing the people of one part of the Lords Supper, and in robbing Chriſt of his mediatory office by ſubſtituting other Mediators in his room. Could I hope that my words would have any influence on the people of this Land, I would intreat all ſorts of men to live *worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called*, and to live anſwerable to the particular calling and ſtation wherein

wherein God hath ſet them. I would beg of the Magiſtrates that they would diſcountenance ſin, that they would incourage Virtue and Holineſs. Where ſin is puniſhed and offenders reſtrained, the community ceaſes to be involved in guilt. *Phinehas executed Judgment and the Plague was ſtayed.* Where Laws are wanting, or not ſtrict enough (as in the caſe of Fornication and Adultery) let new ones be enacted. I would intreat the Clergy that they would both by their lives and doctrine ſet forth Gods word; and that they would beware leſt by their looſe lives they bring ſcorn on Gods worſhip they are Miniſters of; cauſe thoſe great truths to be ſlighted which they preach, when they oppoſe them by their practice; and laſtly, cauſe that Church to be evil ſpoken of, of which they are members and Paſtors. But I muſt not proceed any further in ſuch requeſts, when my diſcourſe is chiefly addreſſed to private Chriſtians. Such would I intreat both in their own perſons *to walk circumſpectly*, and in reference to others, to endeavour to reduce ſuch as walk in ſin, and to train up ſuch as are committed to their care in the fear of God and in the paths of Righteouſneſs: that they would teach their children, what Religion that is, and what the principles and precepts thereof are, to which they were devoted in *Baptiſm*; and withal what obligations they have to walk therein: that they would reſtrain what vices they ſee in their children, and both direct and incourage them in the practice of Piety. This would tend to make the preſent and future generations happy. But I ſhall conclude this with the words of *Samuel*, 1 *Sam.* 12. 20. to the laſt Verſe, *Fear not*; (*ye have done all this wickedneſs:*) *yet turn not aſide from following the Lord, but ſerve the Lord with all your heart. And turn ye not aſide; for then ſhould ye go after vain things, which cannot profit nor deliver:*

deliver: for they are vain. For the Lord will not forſake his people for his great names ſake. (Verſe 24, 25.) *Only fear the Lord, and ſerve him in truth with all your heart: for conſider how great things he hath done for you. But if ye ſhall ſtill do wickedly, ye ſhall be conſumed both ye and your King.*

As our Sins are juſt grounds of our Fears, ſo likewiſe are our *Diviſions* and breaches: which I handle diſtinctly, not as if they were not *ſins*, but becauſe on many reaſons they have a particular unhappy aſpect on theſe Kingdoms. And conſequently,

II. *Union*, *Peace* and *Love* are a chief means of averting the miſeries we fear, and ſecuring the bleſſings which we now enjoy. I ſhall endeavour to make this appear by conſidering what influence our *Diviſions* and *Animoſities* have upon our miſeries, and what reaſons we have from hence to fear, leſt our *Jeſuitical* Enemies ſhould prevail againſt us. And that (1.) *as they provoke Gods diſpleaſure againſt us*: (2.) *and as they afford our Enemies ſo great advantages to hurt and deſtroy us.*

1. Our Diviſions may juſtly provoke the God of love and the Prince of peace to be diſpleaſed at us; in that we find him ſo frequently and earneſtly preſſing us to *ſeek peace and enſue it*; *and as much as in us lieth, to live peaceably with all men*, Rom. 12. 18. In that he repreſents *that wiſdom that is from above*, as *firſt pure, then peaceable, gentle and eaſie to be intreated ---- without partiality*, Jam. 3. 17. When likewiſe we find in his word, *that love, joy* (or rejoycing in others good) *peace, long-ſuffering, gentleneſs, goodneſs*, are *fruits of the Spirit*, Gal. 5. 22. Whereas on the other ſide, *Hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, ſtrife, ſeditions, hereſies, envyings* are called *the works of the fleſh*, Verſe 20, 21. When withal

withal we find Loving one another made a Character of Chriſts diſciples, *John* 13. 35. and thoſe *that ſeparate themſelves* are joyned with ſuch as *are ſenſual*, and that *have not the Spirit*, *Jude* 19. Now can we imagine that God ſhould act with that kindneſs which he ſhews to his obedient Servants, towards thoſe who diſobey his ſtrict command of *keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace?* Or vouchſafe thoſe favours, which belong to his people, to ſuch as walk contrary to the Spirit of Chriſtianity? *Strife*, *Contention* and *Diviſions* proceed from the *Devil*, who hath his names in the ſacred languages of *Satan* and *Diabolus*, from his Enmity to mankind, and his falſe accuſing of Gods people: And if it be too ſevere to make *Hell* the riſe of theſe things, yet to be ſure they proceed from the worſt thing on Earth, *viz. mens Luſts*, *Jam.* 4. 1. Now can we ſuppoſe that God will own thoſe for his people or have regard unto their prayers, who do the *works of the Devil*, and indulge themſelves in the *works of the fleſh?* Have we ground to hope that God will hear us, when we preſent our ſupplications for our *King and thoſe that are in authority under him, that we may lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godlineſs and honeſty*; when we do not *lift up pure hands to God without wrath and debates?* 1 *Tim.* 2. 8. No, we are ſo far from having reaſon to expect Gods favour, that we have juſt ground to fear that God will deliver us up to ſuffer in the ſame cauſe under the ſame Enemies, that then at leaſt we may learn to lay aſide our animoſities: As it happened in the differences betwixt thoſe two eminent Biſhops and fellow-ſufferers in Queen *Maries* days, *Ridley* and *Hooper*.

2. Our Diviſions afford our Enemies great advantages againſt us. It is an ordinary, but yet withal a true obſervation, that civil diſcords have done more to ruine Nations than foreign invaſions: However, that from hence

hence Enemies have been incouraged to invade ſuch as are before weakned and prepared for ſlavery; ſuch who are ſo heated againſt each other, that they will not unite though for their common ſafety. This is particularly obſerved by *Tacitus* a grave Hiſtorian (*in vitâ J. Agric.*) how the ancient inhabitants of this Nation became ſubjected to the *Romans*. *Non aliud adverſus validiſſimas gentes pro nobis utilius, quam quod in commune non conſulunt.* *Nothing more helped the* Romans *to overthrow the valiant* Britains, *than their not agreeing among themſelves for the common intereſt.* I wiſh ſome of our *Brethren*, who pretend to be the greateſt Enemies of the *Roman Religion*, and decry all they diſlike in the *Polity* of our *Church* as *Popiſh*, would ſeriouſly conſider what the conſequence of their *Zeal* is like to be, while carried forth in oppoſing them, who are equally concerned with themſelves to oppoſe that common Enemy. Nay, I wiſh all ſorts of men among us, who hate the corruptions and uſurpations of *Rome*, would conſider this; ſo as to abate their heats towards each other, to ſtudy thoſe things which make for peace and union, and heartily endeavour (ſo far as lies in their power) the healing of our breaches: leſt we become ſurprized amidſt our diviſions, and *Britany* (which God prevent) be once again brought under the *Romiſh yoke*. It hath been long thought, and is now more manifeſt, that the hand of the *Jeſuite* is in all our diviſions: They ſend their Emiſſaries to perſonate ſometimes one party, ſometimes another, hereby to increaſe our flames, to heighten our diſtractions, and to weaken the Proteſtant intereſt, that hence they may the more eaſily prevail againſt us. The diſcovery of the late *horrid Plot* hath brought to light their devices of this kind; how the Jeſuits have intereſted themſelves in our feuds, and as *Preachers among diſſenters* have animated them

againſt the eſtabliſhed government: and they knew if they could effect this, we ſhould with greater eaſe become *a Prey to their teeth.* Further, it is well known how they make uſe of our Diviſions to perſwade perſons to their communion, where (if they may be believed) is nothing but union and concord; and not only ſo, but the readieſt means to end all controverſies by the *Infallible authority of their Church.* Now though the Vanity of this Pretence hath been ſufficiently detected by ſuch, who have ſhewn what diviſions are among them, and that the remedy they ſo much boaſt of, *viz.* the Popes authority, hath been ſo far from healing or allaying their heats, that uſually, when it hath been interpoſed, it hath inflamed and exaſperated them: Yet theſe things many are ignorant of, and therefore our diſſenſions are made uſe of by the *Popiſh factors* to ſeduce poor ignorant perſons into their deluſions. Certainly therefore it concerns us to do all we can to deprive them of this advantage againſt us, if not by being all of one opinion, (which is impoſſible) yet by taking care not to be of *different factions and parties.*

The *Atheiſt* likewiſe from hence ſeeks a pretence for his folly: becauſe he ſees ſuch variety of parties in Religion, therefore he will be of none: which arguing is as fooliſh as it would be in any to ſay there is no true coin, becauſe there is ſo much that is counterfeit, and therefore he will take no mony. However, it is our concernment and duty not wilfully to afford any matter of deriſion to theſe *ſcoffing Iſhmaels*, who when they cannot diſpute, will endeavour to laugh men out of their Religion; and think to do that by *blaſphemous drollery*, which they are unable to do by force of argument. Though we cannot ſtop theſe mens mouths, or hinder their irreligious laughter; yet let us endeavour by our Union to bereave them of one of their pretences.

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I wiſh I could as eaſily cure our breaches, as I can weep over them; or find out means for our Union, as I can affectionately deſire it; or perſwade perſons to the uſe of ſuch means, as I can preſcribe them. I know that as the whole Kingdom would ſhare in the Benefits of ſuch a happy cloſure, ſo moſt men might be inſtrumental one way or other to procure or promote it. I know withal, that as our Governours both in Church and State move in an higher orb, ſo they may have a more eſpecial influence in healing our breaches. But yet I am ſenſible, that it becomes not a private perſon, in ſuch a publick way as this, to addreſs himſelf to them that are in authority, and thence have the ſtamp of Divinity upon them: Neither can I ſuppoſe that they will caſt their Eyes on this Diſcourſe. I ſhall therefore only pray for them; that God would inſpire them with true wiſdom, that they may in the firſt place mind the concerns of Religion, the honour of God, and the happineſs of the Church; upon which the welfare of the Kingdom chiefly depends: and that from hence (as an excellent means to promote theſe ends) they may ſtudy *the things that make for peace* and Union: That as *Nurſing Fathers*, they would ſo far comply with the infirmities of their weak children, as may tend to the good of the community, ſo as in the mean while the government be not unhinged, nor their authority diminiſhed or weakened: that God would make them value Peace and Union among Chriſtians, as a Jewel worthy to be purchaſed with laying aſide many things that are of their own nature indifferent, ſuppoſing no conſiderable damage or inconvenience attend ſuch an alteration: In a word, that God would ſo direct them in the management of the government, that under them we may *lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godlineſs and honeſty*, in all concord and amity.

Leaving therefore my Superiors, I addreſs my ſelf to thoſe in whoſe power it very much conſiſts to put an end to our unhappy diviſions; and thoſe are *my Brethren of the Separation* (for I muſt eſteem them Brethren whatever their thoughts are of me or carriage towards me.) Theſe I would humbly beg to obey that Goſpel-command, *Eph.* 4. 3. *to endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.* And that in *Rom.* 14. 19. *that they would follow after the things which make for peace.* And here let me requeſt of you, who have forſaken your legally conſtituted *Paſtors*, who have withdrawn your ſelves from our publick Aſſemblies, to do theſe two or three following things, which as they are in themſelves reaſonable, ſo they are things that make for peace: I mean chiefly the peace of the *Church of God*, but together herewith the peace of your own *Conſciences.*

1. *Impartially examine* the truth, lawfulneſs and reaſonableneſs of thoſe things which you reject, and for the ſake of which you have left, or are about to leave our *Aſſemblies.* Condemn not any thing uſed by us in Gods Worſhip, before it hath had a legal trial at the Bar of your own Reaſon, and there be found contrary to the *Laws of our Heavenly King.* If you will reject any thing, without trying whether it be lawful, though it be commanded by the Law of the Land; or embrace any doctrines, which have not been before heard of, before you have examined the truth thereof; you are no way ſecure from giving heed to the groſſeſt deluſions, and in a ready way to be *Papiſts*, *Quakers*, or what not? For to act thus, is to put out your own Eyes, or however to ſhut them; and then to chuſe your way *blindfold:* which whoever doth, we wonder not if he miſs the right way, or runs upon that which is exceeding hazardous. Conſider that what is performed in our Aſſemblies are the injunctions

junctions of thoſe *higher powers*, to whom God requires us to *be ſubject*, and that *for Conſcience ſake*, *Rom.* 13.1,5. Neither are we to diſobey them, or to refuſe to do what they require, but when their commands oppoſe the Laws of God. Conſequently we ſhould examine the injunctions of our Superiors, and not dare to reject them, before we find that they are contrary to the Law of God. For otherwiſe we may oppoſe Gods will, while we ſeem zealous for it; and tranſgreſs the Command of God which requires obedience to the higher powers, while we refuſe to obey their Laws which we never found to be any tranſgreſſion of the Law of God. In this your Trial, make Gods will your Rule. Be not led by the Examples of others, nor induced to think any thing lawful or unlawful, true or falſe, merely becauſe ſuch whom you eſteem pious and Religious are of that mind. For beſides, that the beſt of mere men are imperfect and fallible in this life; the giving heed to any doctrine or practice, becauſe men that make great pretences of piety are of that mind, is the way to expoſe you to the worſt of Errors. We know that the *Devil*, and his inſtruments too, appear as *Angels of light*; many *Popiſh Monks* are men of ſtrict lives; ſome *Quakers* are perſons of great uprightneſs in their dealings; and indeed what *Hereticks* have ſhew'd themſelves in the world, but they have at firſt appeared *in the guiſe of extraordinary Sanctity*? So that if we ſhould always give heed to, and follow the ways of every one that appears in the world under more than ordinary ſhews of Godlineſs, we ſhould never be fixed on any ſure foundation; but muſt be always wavering, always changing. And indeed many inſtances might be given of perſons, who upon ſuch ſlender Reaſons have withdrawn themſelves from their *Pariſh-Churches*, and from thence have fallen from one Error to another,

another, till at length they have fallen into groſs *deluſions*, and ſome into *Atheiſm*. In this Trial, make uſe of thoſe helps which God in his providence affords you: I mean the aſſiſtance of able peaceable Divines and of their Writings. I know if I ſhould direct you to the *Friendly Debate* or Dr. *Combers* explications of our publick Prayers, or any other Treatiſes of this nature which are written by Conformiſts, you will with diſdain reject my advice. I ſhall therefore only deſire you to read the writings of ſome learned *Non-conformiſts: viz.* thoſe of Mr. *John Ball* againſt Separation, and others written long ſince; and eſpecially Mr. *Baxters Cure of Church-diviſions*, and Mr. *Tombes* his *Theodulia*, which have been publiſhed of late.

2. If upon impartial trial you cannot ſatisfie your ſelves, ſo far as to comply with every thing that the Magiſtrate enjoyns; yet however ſeriouſly conſider whether you have ground enough from thence to forſake the Communion of the *Church of England*, and to withdraw your ſelves from our Aſſemblies. To this end conſider in what things we and you agree, as well as in what things we diſagree: particularly, whether there be not a *full agreement* in all the *Eſſentials* and *Subſtantials of Chriſtian Religion*. We both own the *ſame Lord Jeſus Chriſt*: we agree in the ſame *Faith*, and that not only in the main *fundamentals*, but alſo in leſſer matters, there being few (if any) Non-conformiſts, who do not approve the doctrinal part of the Thirty Nine Articles of the *Church of England*. We both hope to obtain the ſame Heaven, and both to obtain it the ſame way, *viz.* by Faith in Chriſt manifeſted in an holy converſation. Nay further, we both agree in the main parts of Gods Worſhip: And that both in reference to the *object* of our Worſhip, and *manner* of it. We and you worſhip the

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ſame God, and him alone: We pray not to *Saints* or *Angels*: We pay no *adoration* to the conſecrated Bread in the *Lords Supper*: We bow not down to *Images*. We worſhip God in the inward acts of our Souls, our Faith in God, our reliance and dependence on him, our Love to him, our Senſe of his infinite goodneſs, and the like graces and affections; and by expreſſing theſe in ſuch outward acts, which God hath ordained, and you and we own them as his *Inſtitutions*, ſuch as *Prayer*, *Thankſgiving*, *hearing the Word*, and *the two Sacraments*, *Baptiſm and the Lords Supper*. Where is the difference in all this betwixt you and us? It muſt be therefore in ſomething that is *circumſtantial*: And is this a ſufficient Reaſon to ſeparate from us? It is evident that God hath not obliged us to this or that *Geſture* in his Worſhip, ſuppoſe it be but reverent; that he hath not determined circumſtances this way or that, but hath left them to humane prudence. I will clear this by one inſtance. As we both acknowledge Prayer to be one eſpecial part of Gods Worſhip; ſo we hold, that the chief things we are to requeſt of God, are Pardon, Sanctification, aſſiſtance againſt temptation, and the like: We both own, that our petitions are to be put up in and through the ſame Mediator *Jeſus* Chriſt: We both hold, that it is the fervent deſire of our hearts, and the repreſentation thereof to God, that makes our prayers to be indeed ſuch; And that the holy Spirit works in our Souls a ſenſe of our wants and an earneſt deſire that they may be ſupplied. This is all that concerns the eſſence of Prayer, and herein we are agreed. But in reference to the *geſture*, (ſuppoſing it be ſuch as becomes duſt and aſhes when they addreſs themſelves before the great King of Kings) God hath not determined whether it ſhould be *kneeling*, *ſtanding*, or *lying proſtrate* on our faces; and therefore

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any of theſe may be uſed: In reference to *Time*, whether it ſhould be this or that hour for publick prayer; and therefore that time ſhould be imployed therein, which humane prudence determines as moſt convenient. And the ſame is true in reference to *words in Prayer*: For God hath not determined whether our deſires ſhould be repreſented in words *premeditated*, or in words *immediately conceived*: Neither of theſe are of the *eſſence* of Prayer, neither of them particularly commanded of God, ſo as to exclude the other: both have been uſed by *Saints* in the *Holy Scriptures*, and both approved by God. Therefore when any ask, *Where God hath required forms of Prayer in Scripture?* I would ask theſe perſons, *Where God hath required extemporary Prayers*? And when they demand, where our *Common prayers* are to be found in Gods Word; I would enquire, where they find therein thoſe particular Prayers which they and their Miniſters have poured out to God? By a ſerious conſideration of all this, you may eaſily underſtand how great our agreement is, and conſequently that thoſe things muſt needs be ſmall wherein we diſagree; And will you on account of ſuch things ſeparate from us? If any pretend there are corruptions in our Church, I would deſire ſuch to conſider the ſtate of the Churches in the time of *Chriſts Apoſtles*, and ſee if they do not find as great in the Churches of *Corinth* and *Galatia*; of *Epheſus*, *Pergamus*, *Thyatira*, (*Rev.* 2.) and of *Sardis* and *Laodicea*, (*Rev.* 3.) as they do among us: And withal conſider whether it would not have been a ſin to ſeparate from thoſe Churches. See this handled by Mr. *Baxter* in his *Cure of Church-diviſions*, Chap. 5. I cannot think of any thing that may be a juſt plea for Separation but this, *That ſomething that is ſinful is required as a condition of our Communion.* The chief thing that is inſtanced in, is this,

this, that they muſt worſhip God by *a Form of Prayer*. To make this plea good, they muſt ſhew that forms of Prayer are *ſinful*; and to prove that it is a tranſgreſſion of a Law, and inſtance in the particular Law that is hereby violated. But the caſe is ſo far from this, that we have Forms of Prayer mentioned in Holy Scripture, uſed by good men, and that as an expreſſion of their Piety; nay, in ſeveral caſes preſcribed by *God himſelf*, or his *extraordinary Miniſters*, as that *Num.* 10. 35, 36. *David* and other *Pſalmiſts* penned Forms of Prayer and Praiſe to be uſed by the Church of God in his Service. Neither was there any thing typical in this thing, nor any thing that had reſpect to that *legal Oeconomy*. And indeed if Forms of Prayer were unlawful, then (which it would be blaſphemy to utter) our Saviour ſinned, when he bid his diſciples *when they prayed to ſay, Our Father, &c. Luke* 11. 2. And when he himſelf *prayed uſing the ſame words*, *Matth.* 26. 44. And now I need not add that the whole Church of God in all Ages and places from the Apoſtles time, or however the next Ages after them, have uſed Forms and Liturgies, till ſome few of late among our ſelves have condemned them. How *Proteſtant Churches* beyond the Seas uſe them, is too well known to be here inſiſted on. About this therefore I would only intreat you to conſider (1.) whether any Chriſtian, when he begs Gods bleſſing on his meat, in the ſame words he hath uſed formerly; or renders thanks to God after his meals, in that form, or thoſe expreſſions, he hath aforetime uſed; is he for this guilty of ſinning againſt God? This muſt follow if the uſe of Forms of Prayer be ſinful. (2.) If our *Non-conforming Brethren* uſe the ſame expreſſions, or the ſame method; doth this involve them in guilt? (3.) Conſider, if Forms be unlawful, it is impoſſible that Chriſtians ſhould joyn

together in the ſame publick Prayers to God, in that whatever Prayer is uttered, though it be *extempore* in reference to him that ſpeaks it, yet it is a Form to them that joyn with him therein, they being tied up to his words.

It will not be enough for any to make this a plea for their *Separation*, that it is required of *Miniſters* to uſe the *Surplice* and the *Croſs after Baptiſm*, ſuppoſing they are not ſatisfied of the lawfulneſs of them; much leſs thoſe *Declarations* and *Subſcriptions* which are required of *Miniſters*. For though theſe are required in order to the *Exerciſing of their Miniſtry*, yet are they not required as *Conditions of communion with us*. Hence our Non-conforming Brethren may acquit themſelves to God and their own Conſciences, if upon ſincere endeavours uſed they cannot ſatisfie their judgments to do thoſe things, and therefore lay aſide the exerciſe of their Miniſtry. Nay further, this is enough to cauſe us to judge and act charitably towards them, while we find them in other things conſcientiouſly ſubmitting to authority: I will further add, that when we find many ſuch, this ſhould cauſe us to deſire (if it may ſeem good to our Superiours) that ſome means might be contrived for the admittance of ſuch to the Exerciſe of their Miniſterial Function. Yet on the other ſide, when thoſe Subſcriptions, *&c.* are not required of them as conditions of Communion with us; this cannot juſtifie them, or any other private Chriſtians, in their ſeparating from our Aſſemblies; much leſs in their ſetting up *congregations in oppoſition to ours*. If our Brethrens Conſciences will not permit them to Subſcribe, *&c.* doth their Conſciences forbid them to joyn in our Prayers, however to attend on the Preaching of our Miniſters, in order to which no ſuch condition is required of them?

Having

Having a little gone beyond my first intentions, (*viz.* to speak only to private Christians) I will take leave briefly to answer one Objection that is made in behalf of our Non-conforming Brethren. If we should do thus, we must *hide our Talents in a Napkin*, live unsuitably to that office we are called to, be unprofitable and unserviceable in our Generation. In answer to this, I will not repeat what Non-conformists have in this case answered when urged by the *Brownists*, especially that published by Mr. *Rathband*, and recited in the Second Part of the *Friendly Debate*, pag. 183. *That the Bishops act is the act of the Church, that it lies in them to depose that may ordain*, &c. But this I say, first, that as many have, so more might, improve their abilities to the advantage of Gods Church by their useful writings; others might be highly beneficial, if in their private converse they instructed the ignorant, resolved the doubts of them that are under scruples of Conscience, and the like pious offices which they are not forbidden by the Law. (2.) I add, supposing our Superiours permit it, they might preach publickly in some parts of this Kingdom which are ill-provided with Ministers (as I have heard of a worthy person who thus imploys himself in *Wales*) and not in great places, that are well furnished with Preachers. As their preaching in such places might be beneficial, so their undertaking would be approved by most, connived at by all. (3.) If they preach in other places, is there any necessity in order to the imploying their gifts, that they preach at those times when our publick Assemblies are held for Gods worship; or are they hence constrained to set up Congregations in opposition to ours? If God require of them to preach the Gospel, doth he also require of them that they should by their practice *oppose* and *defie* the Congregations of Gods people that are

legally eſtabliſhed? Laſtly, cannot they uſe their Talent of preaching without adminiſtring the Sacraments in anothers charge, and without withdrawing members from the flocks of others? I am ſure *the old Non-conformiſts* abhorred theſe practices, and condemned them in the *Browniſts*: And we know who were offended at ſuch things in later days when they were Miniſters of *Parochial Churches*. I wiſh they would conſider, whether thoſe Arguments, they then uſed againſt others, be not now of like force againſt themſelves.

But leaving this digreſſion, I return to the Pleas which people make for their *Separation*. And here I again ſay, that when there are no *Declarations* or *Subſcriptions* required of *private Chriſtians as conditions of their Communion*, theſe things are unjuſtly urged as *Reaſons* of their *Separation*. As alſo the pretence of the *Surplice*, when that is not to be worn by you, nor the *Croſs after Baptiſm* to be uſed by you; how can theſe then be grounds for you to forſake us? As for *Kneeling at the Lords Supper*; I know indeed this is required as a geſture in that Ordinance, but certainly unjuſtly excepted againſt. For what Law of God forbids this, or requires any other geſture? If *Chriſts example* obliges us, it equally obliges us to celebrate the Ordinance *after Supper, in an upper room*, and *cloathed with a ſeamleſs Coat*. If we are obliged by Chriſts Example, then we are tied to the particular geſture which Chriſt uſed, and that was the *Tricliniary geſture*, lying on a bed, *&c.* As for thoſe that except againſt this Geſture, as if herein we complied with the *Papiſts in adoring the Hoſt*; theſe perſons, if learned, ſpeak againſt their own knowledge; in that the adoration the Papiſts pay to the Euchariſt, is their falling down when the Prieſt lifts up the Hoſt in the Conſecration of it: when withal the Church of *England* profeſſes

profeſſes (in the Rubrick at the end of the Communion Service) "*that this is only meant for an humble and grate-*
"*ful acknowledgment of the Benefits of Chriſt* ----- And de-
"clares *that thereby no adoration is intended, or ought to be*
"*done, either unto the Sacramental Bread and Wine there*
"*bodily received, or unto any corporal preſence of Chriſts na-*
"*tural Fleſh and Bloud.* ----- (*that were Idolatry to be abhor-*
"*red of all faithful Chriſtians.*) Read the reſt.

I will only ſpeak to one thing more, which is the chief ground why many well-meaning perſons deſert us; We can profit more by hearing *Non-conformiſts* than others, and therefore why ſhould we not forſake our Pariſh-miniſters to hear them?

I anſwer, (1.) were this generally true that hereby men are better Chriſtians than they were before, we have reaſon to rejoyce; in that more honour redounds to God, and good to their own Souls. Are men hereby more acquainted with the Perfections of God, ſo as to live in the ſenſe of his All-ſeeing Eye, his governing the world, his ſupplying us with bleſſings; ſo as continually to fear and love him, daily to offer up their Prayers and Praiſes to him, and more frequent in communicating of the Body and Bloud of Chriſt in the Lords Supper? Are they hereby more dutiful Children, loyal Subjects, obedient to them that have the rule over them, and watch for their Souls, more faithful Servants, more loving Neighbours, and as Parents, more careful to educate their children in the nurture of the Lord? Are they more juſt in their dealings, more charitable and loving in their demeanour, more humble and condeſcending to their fellow-brethren, leſs cenſorious than formerly, leſs prying and intermedling with the affairs of others, and in a word, doing the ſame to others as they deſire others ſhould do to them? Laſtly, are they

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hereby more heedful *leſt their hearts ſhould be overcharged with ſurfeiting, drunkenneſs, and the cares of this life*; are they better able to command and regulate their paſſions and affections; leſs ſolicitous for the things of this world, and more ardently breathing after Heaven? I ſay if theſe, and the like Chriſtian qualifications are wrought in mens Souls by the labours of our Non-conforming Brethren; *we do therein rejoyce, yea and will rejoyce.* I wiſh theſe effects were more generally wrought among their Hearers: and that inſtead thereof many did not make their Hearing them, and ſeparating from us, a Cloak for their ſins. (2.) Suppoſe theſe be generally the fruits of their labours; I wiſh them to conſider, whether the like would not be produced, if their Preachers kept their meetings at other times, than thoſe wherein we aſſemble: and whether the Hearers be the better Chriſtians, for being hindred from joyning with us in our addreſſes to God, and attendance on his word. (3.) May not the like gracious effects be expected in the hearing of their own Paſtors that are Conformiſts? If not, it muſt ariſe either from the inſufficiency of the means, or the denial of Gods Bleſſing upon it. As for the firſt, conſider whether our labours tend not to the foreſaid ends, and whether the producing thoſe effects is not the great thing we drive at; and withal whether the greateſt part of Conformiſt Miniſters are not fitted and qualified for this work? And as for Gods bleſſing, it may in all reaſon be expected from thoſe that attend on us; becauſe they do not offend God by *needleſs ſeparation*, by forſaking the lawful Aſſemblies, by withdrawing themſelves from the Churches of Chriſt, and by breaking the bond of peace in oppoſing them. Gods bleſſing is then chiefly to be expected by us, when we walk in Gods ways. (4.) Suppoſe the Non-conformiſt you

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hear may more warm and raiſe your affections, nay, ſuppoſe his Sermons better fitted to inform you; if theſe benefits may be obtained in a lower degree in our publick Aſſemblies: Conſider whether you ought to leave us, when you give ſo great advantages to the Common Enemy, *the Popiſh Agents*, to deſtroy both you and us: when you do ſo much miſchief by your bad Example, in drawing others to ſeparate, or incouraging them in their Separation: and when from hence you incur ſo much danger by Scandalizing others, (for that is Scandal, when we draw others into ſin, or hinder them in the ways of God:) for a woe is pronounced by our Saviour againſt ſuch, (*Luke* 17. 1, 2.) *and that it were better for him that a milſtone were hung about his neck, and he caſt into the Sea.* (5.) Conſider whether your practice be conſiſtent with the Duties that God requires ſhould be performed to your legal Paſtors, *who labour among you and are over you in the Lord:* Theſe you are commanded *to eſteem very highly in love for their works ſake*, 1 *Theſſ.* 5. 12, 13. Now do you manifeſt any eſteem or love towards them, while by withdrawing your ſelves from hearing them you diſcourage them in their labours? (6.) Suppoſing ſome *N. C.* be a more edifying Teacher, what neceſſity is there that you ſhould hear him in ſuch a conſtancy as to reject your Pariſh-Miniſter; or from hence to forſake our publick Aſſemblies, and to neglect the Sacraments adminiſtred in our Churches? Laſtly, if this be a ſufficient reaſon to leave one Preacher and follow another, becauſe he more affects or pleaſes you, conſider whether this will not be an inlet to all deluſions. If you leave your own Miniſter, whom you cannot but owne preaches the Goſpel of Chriſt, to hear another who in your eſteem preaches more *feelingly*; you may on the ſame reaſon leave this

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new preacher, to follow another and another, and never ſtop till you fall into groſs Errors, to the diſhonour of God, the diſturbance of the Church, and the perdition of your own Souls. As the reaſon of the thing it ſelf evidences this, ſo do the Inſtances of many, who have run thus giddily, ſadly evince the truth hereof. Take heed of being in the number of thoſe ſpoken of, 2 *Tim.* 4. 3. *who after their own luſts heap to themſelves teachers, having itching Ears.* Such are in danger of *turning away their ears from the truth, and turning unto fables,* Verſe 4.

Having thus largely anſwered that objection, I again beſeech you, *Brethen,* in the bowels of love, as you deſire the peace of your own Conſcience, the peace of the Church of God, and the proſperity and peace of *England,* that you would ſeriouſly conſider what I have propounded. It is our Duty to *keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*: This Duty is not practiſed by thoſe, who without any juſt grounds ſeparate themſelves from any true Church: There can be no juſt ground of Separation from our Churches, unleſs you are put upon doing ſomething that is ſinful in order to enjoying Communion with us: Nothing can be ſinful, but what is a Tranſgreſſion of ſome Law of God. Now if any thing occur to your own thoughts, or be propounded by others, as a violation of Gods Laws, which is required as a condition of Communion with us; be ſerious in the examination hereof, before you forſake our Aſſemblies upon the account of its unlawfulneſs. In this trial I beſeech you make Gods revealed will the Rule of your Conſcience, and not the Example or Judgment of ſuch whom you eſteem for their Piety. Several perſons remember how many, who before the late unhappy troubles in this Nation were followers of the Non-conformiſts, though it

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is probable on no other ground, but becauſe they appeared to manifeſt a greater Zeal for God than others; how theſe (I ſay) fell into monſtrous extravagancies after liberty was given to men to vent their fancies. Some who were at firſt eager for the *Presbyterian* Government, immediately cloſed with the *Independents*, when they appeared and preached more movingly to their affections, or from ſuch like ground: they in the mean while being unacquainted with the ſtate of the controverſie, or the arguments uſed on each ſide. Hence it is no wonder they joyned with the *Anabaptiſts*, when they appeared with more affecting expreſſions, or pretended new diſcoveries. Nay, afterwards there was not any new-fangled Sect, but theſe men were ready to become its Proſelytes and Patrons; till at length ſome became *Quakers*, others *Papiſts*, and many of them had their Religion to ſeek; and others were of no Religion, eſpecially ſuch who had at any time run into the licentious madneſs of the *Ranters*. Whence proceeded this, but from zeal without knowledge; hearkening to every body that broached ſomething new, and cloſing therewith without a ſerious trial? Now conſider what ſecurity any of you have from running into ſuch extremes, ſuppoſing the like circumſtances as formerly; if you make the judgments or Examples of others, whom you think pious and zealous for Religion, the Rule of your actings or opinions?

Further conſider, that where there is no neceſſity to ſeparate, and ſo to be of a Party; that this is ſo far from making you good Chriſtians, that ſo far as you are of a Party or Faction you are defective in Chriſtianity. 1 *Cor.* 3. 4. *While one ſaith, I am of* Paul; *and another, I am of* Apollos; *are you not carnal?*

Let not any interpret my being larger in oppoſing *Diviſion and Separation*, than I was in ſpeaking againſt *Wickedneſs and Profaneneſs*, as if I had kinder thoughts for this than for the former: No, my thus doing proceeds only from my kinder thoughts to you, my Brethren, who have already or are about to ſeparate from us. I have juſtly more grounds to hope that you will conſider what I have written, than ſuch who are debauched and hardened in ſin. And therefore I once more beſeech you, as S. *Paul* did the *Epheſians*, *Eph.* 4. 1. *that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowlineſs and meekneſs, with long-ſuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one Body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one Faith, one Baptiſm, one God and Father of all.* 1 Theſ. 4. 11. *We beſeech you, Brethren,* φιλοτιμεῖσθαι ἡσυχάζειν, *to be ambitious to be quiet and peaceable,* and to be as earneſt in promoting unity, as others are buſie in making diviſions and factions. This *Chriſt* and his *Apoſtles* often require as a Duty; this they intreat Chriſtians to be careful about, and back their intreaties with the moſt preſſing Arguments. Now if theſe will not move you in point of Conſcience, nor the danger we are all in from a common Enemy (which by this means chiefly may be prevented) in point of intereſt, I cannot hope that whatever I ſhould urge further ſhould prevail with you.

My hope is only in God, who hath the hearts of all men in his hand, and can turn them as the Rivers of waters. To this fountain of all mercies will I make my humble requeſts, that he would be pleaſed graciouſly to incline all our hearts to deſire and ſeek for peace; that he would ſweeten the Spirits of Chriſtians, that are embittered againſt each other; that he would remove thoſe

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prejudices out of mens minds, which have cauſed our breaches, and continue to widen them; that he would make men more careful to approve themſelves Chriſt's diſciples by obeying his commands, than to be the diſciples and followers of men; Laſtly, that he would put a ſtop to our diviſions and diſtractions, and find out means to bring us in his good time to an happy Union: And I doubt not but all good Chriſtians will joyn with me in this Prayer.

GRacious and heavenly Father, who art the God of Love and Peace, look with an eye of pity upon thy poor diſtreſſed, diſtracted Church in this Kingdom; allay our unchriſtian heats, heal our wounds, cloſe our breaches, pour into all our hearts a Spirit of peace, union and brotherly love; and grant that though we cannot all be of one mind and judgment in this ſtate of Error and Ignorance, yet we may be of one heart and affection, ſo as to follow after thoſe things that make for peace, and avoid whatever hath a tendency to Breaches, Separation and Faction. Grant that petition, which thy dear Son and our bleſſed Saviour requeſted for all which ſhould believe on him, to all Chriſtian profeſſors in this Nation; that *we* all may be One, as thou Father art in him and he in thee; *that we may ſo joyn hands and hearts, as* with one mind and one mouth *to glorifie thee, our heavenly Father: That hereby thou mayeſt have the glory, this Nation the advantage, and each Chriſtian the comfort of this Union. Grant this, we beſeech thee, for thy Sons ſake, who is the Prince of Life and Peace; to whom with thee and the Holy Spirit of Peace, be all praiſe, honour and glory now and for evermore.* Amen.

FINIS.